

The Quran Challenge

**An Anatomy of
Quran's
Literary & Linguistic
Excellence**

Hamza Andreas Tzortzis

Darul Ahnaf Research Forum
Peter Lane, Kolkata, West Bengal

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HAMZA ANDREAS TZORTZIS



Darul Ahnaf Research Forum
Peter Lane, Kolkata 73, West Bengal, India

RIYAZSALIHEEN@GMAIL.COM

General Editor & Research Coordinator

Shakeel Advocate x.com: @humvee

In the Name of Allah The Compassionate, The Merciful

An Anatomy of Quran's Literary & Linguistic Excellence

Table of Contents

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. The Case of Labid Ibn Rabiya**
- 3. The Case of Ibn-al Muqaffa**
- 4. About The Author**
- 5. The Literary and Linguistic Excellence of Quran.**
- 6. What Is Poetry?**
- 7. Arabic Literary Forms.**
- 8. Constituents of Arabic Poetry?**
- 9. What Is Arabic Prose?**
- 10. Mursal**
- 11. What Is a Miracle?**
- 12. Why is the Qur'an a Miracle?**
- 13. The Challenge in the Qur'an.**
- 14. The Elephant Verse of Musalaimah Bin Kzzaab.**
- 15. Linguistically Qur'an Is Unmatchable.**
- 16. Technically Qur'an Is Not Poetry?**
- 17. Quran Is Not Normal Speech.**
- 18. Qur'an Is Not Rhymed Prose.**
- 19. The Qur'an Transcends Saj'**
- 20. Greater Tendency To Mono-rhyme**
- 21. Rhetorical Devices - Explained.**
- 22. Qur'an bound stylistic variations.**
- 23. How Are Stylistic Variations Unique To The Qur'an?**
- 24. Example 1: Word Order, Sound And Meaning.**
- 25. Example 2: Grammatical Shift (iltifaat)**
- 26. Example 3: Qur'anic precision**
- 27. Example 3: Qur'anic precision.**
- 28. Example 4: Maintenance of rhythm.**
- 29. Example 5: Singular and plural words**
- 30. Example 6: Qur'anic imagery and word choice**
- 31. Example 5: Singular and plural words.**
- 32. Example 6: Imagery And Word Choice.**
- 33. Example 7: The Challenge: Surah Al Kausar.**

34. References

Introduction

For 1400 years, countless individuals have attempted to rise to the challenge posed by the Quran, even during the lifetime of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, but all their efforts have been in vain.

The challenge is straightforward: to create a Surah that rivals those found in the Quran. The challenge is in the language of the Quran i.e Arabic and not its translation.

After diving deep into the criticisms aimed at the Quran's challenge as to its inimitability, I've come to a straightforward conclusion about three different types of people involved. The first group is made up of those who genuinely attempted to recreate one or more Surahs of the Quran but ultimately fell short and recognized their limitations.

The second group consists of individuals who, even after failing, refuse to accept their defeat. Instead, they come up with weak excuses and flawed logic, often pointing fingers at the Quran for their own shortcomings.

The third category includes those who haven't even tried to take on the challenge and probably won't;

they prefer to speculate and question the very challenge that the Quran presents.

Among the early figures in the first group are Labid Ibn Rabiya and Ibn-al Muqaffa, who sincerely tried to imitate the Surahs of the Quran.

The Case of Labid Ibn Rabiya

Labid Ibn Rabiya, was a well-known poet. He was a contemporary of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and the last in a line of seven celebrated poets of his time. His eloquence was so remarkable that during a famous annual fair at Ukaz, his recitations mesmerized the audience, earning him the respect of fellow poets. In pre-Islamic times, outstanding poets were honored at these events by having their works displayed on the walls at the entrance of the Kaaba, allowing people to appreciate their poetry all year round.

Before converting to Islam, Labid wrote a poem in response to the Quran, which was later showcased. Soon after, a Muslim placed verses from the Quran alongside Labid's poem. The next day, after reading them, Labid was profoundly touched and declared that such words could only come from a divine source. He embraced Islam without hesitation. Despite his reputation as a poet, Labid was so impressed by the Quran's literary brilliance that he decided to stop writing poetry altogether. When asked why he made that choice, he simply responded, "With the divine compositions found in the Quran, it would be inappropriate for me to recite poetry."

The Case of Ibn-al Muqaffa

Ibn-al Muqaffa (who passed away in 727 A.D.) was a well-known Arabic scholar and writer of Persian descent. Some skeptics challenged him to respond to the significant influence the Quran was having on society. Feeling confident in his skills, he thought he could create a worthy imitation of the Quran within a year. The skeptics provided him with all the resources and comforts he needed to support his efforts.

After six months, curiosity about his progress grew. When they checked in on him, they found him sitting with a pen, staring blankly at a piece of paper, surrounded by a mountain of crumpled pages. This respected and articulate writer had genuinely attempted to create something that could stand alongside the Quran, but he had utterly failed. Embarrassed, he admitted that despite his six months of hard work, he hadn't been able to write even a single sentence that could match the Quran's brilliance. Defeated and disheartened, he eventually gave up on his pursuit.

Orientalist Wollaston writes in his book, "Muhammad, His Life and Doctrines", that Muhammad's claim about the literary excellence of the Quran was indeed justified.

The Quran challenges skeptics to produce a surah like it in verse 2:24, stating, "And you will never do it." (But if you do not - and you will never be able

to - then fear the Fire, whose fuel is people and stones, prepared for the disbelievers.)

“Do they not reflect on the Quran? If it had not been from God, they would have found many contradictions in it.” (4:82)

Those who believe that the Quran was written by humans rather than being divine should consider that no ordinary person would dare to issue such a challenge, fearing they would be quickly exposed as a fraud. The Quran and the challenge it presents to humanity cannot possibly be of human origin.

No human effort is ever truly finished; there's always room for enhancement, expansion, and imitation. Human standards can always be reached again. However, the Quran is distinct because it is both definitive and impossible to replicate.

Those who think the Quran was written by humans instead of being divinely inspired should consider that an ordinary person would hesitate to make such a bold claim, worried about being seen as arrogant and insincere. The Quran, along with the challenge it poses to humanity, cannot originate from mere human efforts.

Human creations are never completely done; they can always be built upon, polished, and copied. Standards set by people are always attainable. In contrast, the Quran is remarkable because it is both final and unmatched.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ is quoted in Bukhari as saying, "All of the prophets were given miracles that inspired belief. The miracle I have is the Quran."

This brief book isn't an exhaustive exploration of the topic. Instead, I've aimed to create a simple introduction. It offers a concise overview of the anatomy of Quran's challenge in as few words as possible. I've significantly revised the original text in terms of vocabulary, language, and style to enhance clarity. There's always potential for improvement, no matter how many times you revise something. This realization deepens my appreciation for the Quran, which stands out as the one text that requires no improvement.

In sha Allah, our next book will be: Evaluating Critics of the Quran's Challenge.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
مَنْعَتُكَ اللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُ

Shakeel Advocate
February 2021, Kolkata

About The Author

Hamza Andreas Tzortzis born in 1980, is a British Muslim of Greek descent. He c¹onverted to Islam in 2002. Hamza is a renowned international lecturer, public speaker, and author. His primary interests lie in the realms of Islam, philosophy, and politics. He has engaged in debates with notable scholars and intellectuals. Research is Hamza's passion.

As an international public speaker on Islam, Hamza is also a prolific writer, contributing articles, essays, and commentaries on political philosophy, the philosophy of religion, and societal issues. He is an ²intellectual activist who actively addresses topics related to religion, social cohesion, and politics.

Hamza frequently participates in debates and symposiums alongside leading thinkers, public speakers, and academics, discussing subjects related to Western and Islamic philosophy, politics, and contemporary issues.

Notably, he debated Rick Lewis, the editor of Philosophy Now magazine, in a discussion titled “God: Delusion or Truth?”

He was also engaged in a debate with Peter Cave, a bestselling author and chair of the British Humanist

1

2

Association's Philosophers Group, on the topic "Can We Live Better Lives Without Religion?"

More recently, Hamza debated the esteemed professor Simon Blackburn, a prominent atheist and humanist scholar, in the historic debating chambers of Cambridge University.

In addition to his speaking engagements, Hamza frequently appears in various media outlets, where he clarifies misconceptions about Islam and offers insightful perspectives on current events. His media presence includes appearances on BBC, BBC Arabic, BBC Radio 4, Press TV, Islam Channel, Ummah TV, and Iqra.

Hamza is also the founder and CEO of Sapience Institute.

He is the author of the best-selling book: "The Divine Reality: God, Islam and The Mirage of Atheism", which has been translated into over 10 languages.

He co-authored, "Unveiling Tyranny: The Genocide in Gaza and False Zionist Narratives on Palestine".

He has an MRes, MA and a PgCert in Philosophy from the University of London. He is in the final year of his PhD on the Qur'ān and its verses pertaining to nature. He has studied Islamic Thought and Theology under qualified scholars.

**In The Name of Allah The Compassionate the
Merciful.**

**The Literary and Linguistic Excellence of
Quran.**

PETER LANE

"Read! In the Name of your Lord Who has created. He has created man from a leech-like clot. Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous. Who has taught (the writing) by the pen. He has taught man that which he knew not." Surah Al-'Alaq (The Clot) 96: 1-5

The initial verses of the Qur'an were revealed to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) more than fourteen centuries ago. During a period of solitude and reflection in a cave near Makkah, he received the first revelation of a text that would profoundly influence the world. Despite not knowing how to read and write and lacking any poetic skills or rhetorical abilities, Prophet Muhammad was entrusted with the opening of a book that would address belief, law, politics, rituals, spirituality, and economics in a groundbreaking literary style.

This distinctive literary style contributes to the miraculous essence of the Qur'an, which sparked a remarkable intellectual revival among the desert Arabs. Thirteen years after the initial revelation, it became the foundational text for a new state in Madinah, shaping the political, philosophical, and spiritual framework of emerging civilizations. In this chapter, we will explore the reasons why the Qur'an is deemed inimitable by examining how its language

stands apart from traditional Arabic poetry and prose. Gaining an understanding of the Qur'an's unique literary style is crucial for appreciating its miraculous nature.

Arabic literary forms can be categorized as either prose or poetry. However, both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars agree that the Qur'an transcends these conventional forms of Arabic expression.

What Is Poetry?

Poetry is a literary art form that employs language for its aesthetic and evocative qualities, often going beyond its literal meaning. It can exist as standalone pieces or be integrated with other art forms, such as poetic drama, hymns, lyrics, or prose poetry. Poetry frequently utilizes specific structures and conventions to convey deeper meanings or elicit emotional and sensory reactions. Techniques like assonance (the repetition of vowel sounds), alliteration (the repetition of consonant sounds), and onomatopoeia (words that phonetically imitate sounds) are commonly employed.

This unique literary form is part of the miraculous nature of the Qur'an, that led to the dramatic intellectual revival of desert Arabs. Thirteen years after the first revelation, it became the primary reference for a new state in Madinah, providing the new civilizations' political, philosophical, and spiritual outlook. In this chapter, we will begin to examine why the Qur'an is impossible to imitate by

reviewing how the language of the Qur'an compares to the normal literary forms of Arabic poetry and prose. Understanding the unique literary form of the Qur'an, provides an essential insight into its miraculous nature.

Arabic Literary Forms.

According to both Muslim and Non-Muslim scholars, the Qur'an defies classification as any conventional form of Arabic expression.

Constituents of Arabic Poetry?

Arabic poetry is a unique literary art form that employs language not only for its literal meaning but also for its aesthetic and emotional resonance. It can exist as standalone pieces or be intertwined with other artistic expressions, such as poetic drama, hymns, lyrics, or prose poetry. This art form often adheres to specific structures and conventions that suggest deeper meanings or evoke strong emotional responses. Techniques like assonance (the repetition of vowel sounds), alliteration (the repetition of consonant sounds), onomatopoeia (words that mimic the sounds they describe), and rhythm are frequently utilized to create musical or incantatory effects. The use of ambiguity, symbolism, irony, and other stylistic elements allows for a multitude of interpretations, while devices such as metaphor, simile, and metonymy forge connections between seemingly unrelated images.

In Arabic, poetry (ash-shi'r ul-arabiya) is characterized by its metrical structure and rhyme.

The rhyme (qafiyah) is established by ensuring that each line concludes with a specific letter. The metrical nature of Arabic poetry is defined by its rhythmic patterns (arud). There are sixteen recognized rhythmic patterns known as 'al-bihar,' which translates to 'The Seas' in Arabic. This term reflects the rhythmic divisions that guide the poem's flow, akin to the movement of ocean waves.

Below is a compilation of the rhythmic patterns that form the foundation of Arabic poetry:

at-tawil; al-bassit; al-wafir; al-kamil; ar-rajs; al-khafif; al-hazaj; al-muttakarib; al-munsarih; al-muktatab; al-mutadarak; al-madid; al-mujtath; al-ramel; al-khabab; as-saria'.

Each one of the al-bihar has a unique rhythmical pattern. The al-bihar were first codified in the 8th century by al-Khalil ibn Ahmad and have changed little since. The al-bihar are based on the length of syllables. A literary analysis of any Arabic poem will conclude that it adheres to, or is based upon, these rhythmical patterns. This is supported by Louis Cheikho who collected pre-Islamic and post-Islamic poetry and concluded that all of the poems conformed and were based upon the al-bihar.[4] An example of Arabic poetry is the ancient Arabian poem called 'Abu-l-'Ata of Sind':

"Of thee did I dream, while spears between us were quivering and sooth of our blood full drop had drunken the tawny shafts I know not, by heaven I swear and true is the word I say this pang is it love

sickness or a spell from thee if it be a spell, then grant me grace of my love-longing if the other the sickness be then none is the guilt of thine."[5]

What Is Arabic Prose?

Saj'

In his book, *Ulum al-Qur'an* (An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'an), Von Denffer, provides the following description of saj':

"A literary form with some emphasis on rhythm and rhyme, but distinct from poetry. Saj' is not really as sophisticated as poetry, but has been employed by Arab poets, and is the best known of the pre-Islamic Arab prosodies. It is distinct from poetry in its lack of meter, i.e. it does not have a consistent rhythmical pattern and it shares with poetry the element of rhyme, though in many cases somewhat irregularly employed."[6]

Although saj' differs from poetry in that it lacks a consistent rhythmical pattern, there is some form of pattern based upon the accent in each division of saj'. Accent based rhythmical patterns are based upon stresses rather than the number of syllables. Additionally saj' is distinct from poetry and other forms of Arabic speech due to its concentrated use of rhetorical features.[7] Rhetorical features are literary and linguistic devices intended to please or persuade, that differ from normal speech. Examples of rhetorical features include sound, rhythm, ellipsis and grammatical shift (iltifaat).[8]

In summary the definition of saj' is that it has a,

- i) Accent based (or stress-timed) rhythmical pattern
- ii) End rhyme
- iii) Concentrated use of rhetorical features

Mursal

Mursal can be defined as a literary form that goes on, but is continued straight throughout without any divisions, either of rhyme or of anything else. Mursal is meant as a way of expression that closely resembles everyday spoken language. Examples can be seen in speeches and prayers intended to encourage or motivate the masses.

In summary the definition of mursal is that it has,

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- i) No rhythmical pattern
- ii) No rhyme
- iii) A resemblance to straight forward speech

What Is a Miracle?

The term miracle originates from the Latin word 'miraculum,' which translates to 'something wonderful.' Traditionally, a miracle is viewed as a breach of natural law (lex naturalis); however, this definition lacks coherence. This confusion arises from our interpretation of natural laws. As Bilynskyj points out, "as long as natural laws are seen as universal inductive generalizations, the idea of violating a natural law becomes incoherent."

Natural laws represent inductive generalizations based on the patterns we observe in the universe. To clarify, induction—also referred to as inductive reasoning or inductive logic—involves drawing general conclusions from specific observations. It can be viewed as a method of theory development, where particular facts are utilized to formulate a theory that elucidates the relationships among those facts and enables predictions about future knowledge. For instance, one might reason that since all the ice they have encountered was cold, it follows that all ice is cold. Issues can arise when hasty generalizations are made from a sample to a broader population. A simple illustration would be concluding that if a quarter of the students in a class are left-handed, then a quarter of the entire town's population must also be left-handed.

Moreover, if we define a miracle as a breach of natural law, or a disruption of the patterns we observe in the universe, we encounter a significant dilemma. This dilemma questions why we cannot consider this perceived disruption as part of the pattern itself. Therefore, a more coherent understanding of a miracle might be to view it not as a 'violation' but as an 'impossibility.' William Lane Craig challenges the notion of a miracle as a "violation of a natural law" and instead proposes a more coherent definition: "events that lie outside the productive capacity of nature." In essence, this suggests that miracles are acts of impossibility regarding causal or logical relationships.

Why is the Qur'an a Miracle?

What makes the Qur'an a miracle, is that it is impossible for a human being to compose something like it, as it lies outside the productive capacity of the nature of the Arabic language. The productive capacity of nature, concerning the Arabic language, is that any grammatically sound expression of the Arabic language will always fall with-in the known Arabic literary forms of prose and poetry. All of the possible combinations of Arabic words, letters and grammatical rules have been exhausted and yet its literary form has not been matched linguistically. The Arabs, who were known to have been Arabic linguists par excellence, failed to successfully challenge the Qur'an. Forster Fitzgerald Arbuthnot, who was a notable British Orientalist and translator, states:

"...and that though several attempts have been made to produce a work equal to it as far as elegant writing is concerned, none has as yet succeeded." [11]

The implication of this is that there is no link between the Qur'an and the Arabic language; however this seems impossible because the Qur'an is made up of the Arabic language. On the other hand, every combination of Arabic words and letters have been used to try and imitate the Qur'an. Therefore, this leaves only one conclusion; a Divine explanation is the only coherent explanation for this impossible Arabic literary form – the Qur'an. Hence, it logically follows that if the Qur'an is a literary event that lies outside the productive capacity of the Arabic

language, i.e. an impossibility, then by definition, it is a miracle.

The Challenge in the Qur'an.

In the following verses Allah has challenged the whole of mankind to try and produce a single chapter like the Qur'an. This challenge, which has remained unmet, captivated the minds of the Arabs at the time of revelation. They rationally assessed that if an Arab cannot challenge the Qur'an and nor could a non-Arab, then the only source of the Qur'an is the Creator. The Qur'an states:

"If you are in doubt of what We have revealed to Our Messenger, then produce one chapter like it, call upon all your helpers, besides Allah, if you are truthful." Surah al-Baqarah (The Heifer) 2: 23.

"Or do they say: "He (Prophet Muhammad,) has forged it (this Qur'an)?" Nay! They believe not! Let them then produce a recitation like it (the Qur'an) if they are truthful." Surah at-Toor (The Mount) 52: 33-34.

According to Qur'anic commentators such as Ibn Kathir, Suyuti and Ibn Abbas, these verses issue a challenge to produce a chapter that imitates the unique literary form of the Qur'an.[12] The tools needed to meet this challenge are the finite grammatical rules and the twenty eight letters that make-up the Arabic alphabet; these are independent and objective measures available to all. The fact that it has not been matched since it was revealed does not surprise scholars familiar with the Arabic language and that of the Qur'an.

The Qur'an was revealed over 1430 years ago and the challenge to produce something like the Qur'an has remained to this day. Throughout the centuries, thinkers, poets, theologians and literary critics have attempted to challenge the Qur'an. Some of these challengers in the past have included: Musaylamah; Ibn Al-Mukaffa; Yahya ibn Al-Hakam al-Ghazal; Sayyid 'Ali Muhammad; Bassar ibn Burd.

Without going into an extensive analysis of why Muslim and non-Muslim scholars have agreed that those who have attempted to challenge the Qur'an have failed, the following summary should suffice. Even though the challengers have had the same set of 'tools', which are the twenty eight Arabic letters, finite grammatical rules and the blue print of the challenge – which is the Qur'an itself; they have failed to:

1. Replicate the Qur'an's literary form
2. Match the unique linguistic nature of the Qur'an
3. Select and arrange words like that of the Qur'an
4. Select and arrange similar grammatical particles
5. Match the Qur'an's superior eloquence and sound
6. Equal the frequency of rhetorical devices
7. Match the level of content and informativeness
8. Equal the Qur'an's conciseness and flexibility

The following few lines shows a translation of Musaylamah's attempt to challenge the Qur'an by trying to write something similar to Surah al-Feel (The Elephant, 105). Another important point to consider here is that the miracle of the Qur'an is the

Arabic language itself. So when the Qur'an is translated into another language, although the general meaning becomes apparent, the actual miracle is lost.

The Elephant Verse of Musalaimah Bin Kzzaab.

"What is the elephant?

And who shall tell you what the elephant is?

He has a ropy tail and a long trunk.

This is a [mere] trifle of our Lord's creations."

It can be clearly seen, with reference to the Arabic original, that the style of Musaylamah's speech is in the kahin style of rhymed prose. It lacks informativeness and the words and phrases that have been used can be replaced with other words that will express greater meaning as well as producing a more eloquent discourse. In stark contrast, the words of the Qur'an are such that they cannot be replaced by something else.

Hence, from a literary and stylistic point of view, this attempt failed to replicate the Qur'an. The totality of every chapter is a special characteristic of the Qur'an, each having its own unique form and its unique use of literary devices. The Qur'an's inimitable eloquence is based upon:

- i. Eloquent use of language to please and persuade;
- ii. Its perfect choice of words expressions with the best of verbal forms;
- iii. Accuracy of meaning;
- iv. Apt selection of pronouns and rhetorical devices;

v. Interrelation between style, structure and meaning.

The list above is not exhaustive and represents just some of the reasons why it has not been possible to emulate the Qur'an to this day.

Linguistically Qur'an Is Unmatchable.

The inability to produce anything like the Qur'an, due to its unique literary form, is the essence of the Qur'anic miracle. The argument posed by Muslim theologians and philosophers is that if, with the finite set of Arabic linguistic tools at humanity's disposal, there is no effective challenge, then providing a naturalistic explanation for the Qur'an's uniqueness is incoherent and doesn't explain its inimitability. This is because a human author is only able to produce the known literary forms in the Arabic language. The development of an entirely new literary form is beyond the scope of the natural capacity of any human author, hence a Divine entity, Allah, is the only sufficient comprehensive explanation. The evidence for this is that for over a millennia, the speech and writings of the Arabs have always fallen within the known forms and expressions of the Arabic language. However, the Qur'an breaks this natural pattern due to its uniqueness. Taha Husayn, a prominent Egyptian litterateur, in a public lecture summarised how the Qur'an achieves its own unique form:

"But you know that the Qur'an is not prose and that it is not verse either. It is rather Qur'an, and it cannot be called by any other name but this. It is not verse,

and that is clear; for it does not bind itself to the bonds of verse. And it is not prose, for it is bound by bonds peculiar to itself, not found elsewhere; some of the binds are related to the endings of its verses, and some to that musical sound which is all its own.

It is therefore neither verse nor prose, but it is "a Book whose verses have been perfected and expounded, from One Who is Wise, All-Aware." We cannot therefore say it is prose, and its text itself is not verse. It has been one of a kind, and nothing like it has ever preceded or followed it." [13]

Hence, the Qur'an is truly a unique expression of the Arabic language. Nothing has come before or after it that can match its literary form and style. This next section will discuss how the Qur'an compares to Arabic poetry and prose.

Technically Qur'an Is Not Poetry?

The Qur'an cannot be simply described as poetry because the totality of each surah does not conform to any of the al-bihar and in many places does not exhibit the same regular rhythmic patterns of the al-bihar. Surah al-Kawthar (A River in Paradise, 108) is a good example to show how the Qur'an is not Arabic poetry:

Inna a'tayna kal kawthar

Verily, We have granted you al-Kawthar.

Fasalli li rabbika wanhar

Therefore turn in prayer to your Lord and sacrifice.

Inna shani-aka huwal abtar

For he who hates you, he will be cut off.

The syllables of these verses do not correspond to any pattern similar to the al-bihar of Arabic poetry. In fact, there is no syllabic rhythmical pattern in this surah. Mohammad Khalifa in The Authorship of the Qur'an concludes,

"Readers familiar with Arabic poetry realize that it has long been distinguished by its wazn, bahr, arud and qafiyah (i.e. exact measures of syllabic sounds and rhymes), which have to be strictly adhered to even at the expense of grammar and a shade of meaning at times. All of this is categorically different from Qur'anic literary style." [14]

Quran Is Not Normal Speech.

As discussed previously Arabic prose can be defined either as rhymed (saj') or normal speech (mursal). If we compare mursal with the Qur'an, we find that the construction of the Qur'an is not just straightforward speech. This is due to the use of rhyme, rhythm, depth of meaning and unique stylistic features abundant throughout the Qur'an. Mursal is just normal speech that does not employ any of the above features. A superficial analysis on Surah al-Kawthar will conclude that it cannot be described as normal speech.

Inna a'tayna kal kawthar
Fasalli li rabbika wanhar
Inna shani-aka huwal abtar

These verses employ an end rhyme as can be seen by the letters in bold. The repetition of the ending 'ka'

(you) is responsible for creating the chapter's rhythm. By highlighting just this surah's rhyme and rhythm, clearly shows that the Qur'an is not straightforward speech.

Qur'an Is Not Rhymed Prose.

The Qur'an has its own unique form so it cannot be described as the normal rhymed prose that is evident in other works of Arabic literature. There are three major opinions based upon modern and classical scholarship on how the Qur'an achieves its own unique literary form of rhymed prose or saj':

The Qur'an Transcends Saj'

The Qur'an shares similar features with saj', specifically in the early Makkan surahs, but it completely transcends many aspects of what defines saj'. What makes the Qur'an unique in this context is:

Greater Tendency To Mono-rhyme

The Qur'an differs from saj' due to its use of mono-rhyme, meaning that its rhyming scheme conforms to a few rhymes rather than a selection of many rhymes. According to one analysis, just over half of the Qur'an ends with the same letter.[17] This particular use of rhyme, in a text the size of the Qur'an, has not been replicated in any Arabic text. Devin J. Stewart states:

"Qur'anic saj' has a much greater tendency to mono-rhyme than does later saj'. A small number of rhymes...are predominant in the Qur'an whereas rhyme in later saj' shows greater variation." [18]

b. Does not conform to a particular style

The general description of saj' is that it has an end rhyme. However, the Qur'an does not conform to a constant or consistent rhyme, which reflects the work of ar-Rummani[19] who states that the Qur'an's use of language is semantically orientated and does not conform to a particular style. Semantically orientated means the use of language is driven by meaning, in other words the message that is being portrayed, in contrast to the language of the poets when they used words and phrases primarily for sound and rhythm rather than any coherent meaning.

This is also reflected by Devin J. Stewart's analysis, he states, "The Qur'an allows inexact rhymes which are not found in later saj'"[20]

c. Greater range of saj' phrases

The divisions of saj' or single phrases of saj' are called saj'aat.[21] The Qur'an differs from normal saj' as it has a greater range of short and long saj'aat. Devin J. Stewart states, "Both in the Qur'an and in later saj' we see that shorter saj' is much more common, but the range in the Qur'an is greater." [22]

d. Higher frequency of rhetorical features

The Qur'an is a 'sea of rhetoric'. The Qur'an exhibits an unparalleled frequency of rhetorical features, surpassing any other Arabic text, classical or modern.[23] The use of rhetoric in the Qur'an stands out from any other type of discourse.[24] The following examples show that the Qur'an employs a

wider range and frequency of rhetorical features than any other rhymed prose; past or present [please refer to the original Arabic to understand the examples given below].

Rhetorical Devices - Explained.

i. Alliteration.

This is a literary or rhetorical stylistic device that consists of repeating the same consonant sound within several words in close succession. For example repetition of kum in the following verse:

"He will direct you to do righteous good deeds and will forgive you your sins. And whosoever obeys Allah and His Messenger, he has indeed achieved a great achievement." Surah al-Ahzaab (The Confederates) 33: 71.

Another example of alliteration occurs in Surah al-Mursalaat when the letter meem is repeated in quick succession:

"Did We not create you from a despised water? Surah al-Mursalaat (Those sent forth) 77: 20.

ii. Analogy

This can be a spoken or textual comparison between two words (or sets of words) to highlight some form of semantic similarity between them. For example:

"And cushions set in rows. And rich carpets spread out." Surah al-Ghaashiyah (The Overwhelming) 88: 15-16.

"Therefore, treat not the orphan with oppression. And repulse not the beggar." Surah ad-Duhaa (The Forenoon) 93: 9-10.

iii. Antiphrasis

This is a figure of speech that is used to mean the opposite of its usual sense, especially ironically. For example:

"Then pour over his head the torment of boiling water. Taste you (this)! Verily, you were (pretending to be) the mighty, the generous!" Surah ad-Dukhaan (The Smoke) 44: 48-49.

iv. Antithesis

This is a counter-proposition and denotes a direct contrast to the original proposition. For example:

"Those who disbelieve, theirs will be a severe torment; and those who believe and do righteous good deeds, theirs will be forgiveness and a great reward." Surah Faatir (The Originator of Creation) 35: 7.

v. Asyndeton

This term is used for a stylistic scheme in which conjunctions are deliberately omitted from a series of related clauses. For example in the following verses the subject matter switches within the same verse without any linkage:

"Allah is He Who raised the heavens without any pillars that you can see. Then, He rose above the Throne. He has subjected the sun and the moon, each running (its course) for a term appointed. He manages and regulates all affairs; He explains the Ayat (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) in detail, that you may believe with certainty in the Meeting with your Lord." Surah ar-Ra'd (The Thunder) 13: 2.

vi. Assonance

A refrain of vowel sounds to create internal rhyming within phrases or sentences, For example the words eeyaa bahum and hesaa bahum in the following two verses:

"Verily, to Us will be their return; Then verily, for Us will be their reckoning." Surah al-Ghaashiyah (The Overwhelming) 88: 25-26.

vii. Cadence

Cadence is the rhythmic rise or fall of the voice when a text is read aloud. This powerful feature is one of the most beautiful attractions of the Qur'an and is present throughout. It is a major phonetic and cohesive element which makes the Qur'an impossible to imitate. No other text has done this before, especially in such frequency and in combination with assonance and the many other

phonetic devices such as assimilation, nasalisation, etc.

viii. Chiasmus

In rhetoric, chiasmus is the figure of speech in which two or more clauses are related to each other through a reversal of structures in order to make a larger point, for example:

"You make the night to enter into the day, and You make the day to enter into the night, You bring the living out of the dead and, You bring the dead out of the living. And You give wealth and sustenance to whom You will, without limit." Surah aal-Imraan (The Family of Imraan) 3: 27.

ix. Epizeuxis

In linguistics, an epizeuxis is the repetition of words in immediate succession, for vehemence or emphasis. For example in Surah ash-Sharh we read:

"Verily, along with every hardship is relief, verily, along with every hardship is relief." Surah ash-Sharh (The Opening Forth) 94: 5-6.

x. Equivoque

This is the use of a term with more than one meaning or sense. For example use of the word 'mountains' in the following verse:

"See you not that Allah drives the clouds gently, then joins them together, then makes them into a heap of layers, and you see the rain comes forth from

between them; and He sends down from the sky hail (like) mountains, and strikes therewith whom He wills, and averts it from whom He wills. The vivid flash of its (clouds) lightning nearly blinds the sight." Surah an-Noor (The Light) 24: 43.

xi. Homonymy

This is a group of words, that share the same spelling and the same pronunciation but can have a different meaning. For example, in the following verse the word makara can have both good and bad meaning. In the context of the verse we see the evil plotting and planning of those who wished to kill Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) as opposed to Allah's plan to protect Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him).

"And they (disbelievers) plotted (to kill Jesus), and Allah planned too. And Allah is the Best of those who plan." Surah aal-Imraan (The Family of Imraan) 3: 54.

xii. Hyperbole

A term for when statements that are deliberately exaggerated to underline a point. For example:

"Verily, those who deny Our verses and treat them with arrogance, for them the gates of heaven will not be opened, and they will not enter Paradise until the camel goes through the eye of the needle (which is impossible). Thus do We recompense the Mujrimun (criminals, polytheists, sinners)." Surah al-A'raaf (The Heights) 7: 40.

"When they came upon you from above you and from below you, and when the eyes grew wild and the hearts reached to the throats, and you were harbouring doubts about Allah." Surah al-Ahzaab (The Confederates) 33: 10.

xiii. Isocolon

A figure of speech in which parallelism is reinforced. For example:

"Let the rich man spend according to his means; and the man whose resources are restricted, let him spend according to what Allah has given him. Allah puts no burden on any person beyond what He has given him. Allah will grant after hardship, ease. And many a town (population) revolted against the Command of its Lord and His Messengers; and We called it to a severe account, and We shall punish it with a horrible torment (in Hell in the Hereafter). So it tasted the evil result of its affair (disbelief), and the consequence of its affair (disbelief) was loss (destruction in this life and an eternal punishment in the Hereafter). Allah has prepared for them a severe torment. So fear Allah and keep your duty to Him, O men of understanding, who have believed! Allah has indeed sent down to you a Reminder (this Qur'an)." Surah at-Talaaq (The Divorce) 65: 7-10.

xiv. Metaphor

A metaphor is a term that concisely compares two things, saying that one is like the other. For example:

"And We shall turn to whatever deeds they (disbelievers, polytheists, sinners) did, and We shall make such deeds as scattered floating particles of dust." Surah al-Furqaan (The Criterion) 25: 23.

"And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him. And that you be dutiful to your parents. If one of them or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of disrespect, nor shout at them but address them in terms of honour. And lower to them the wing of submission and humility through mercy, and say: "My Lord! Bestow on them Your Mercy as they did bring me up when I was young." Surah al-Israa (The Journey by Night) 17: 23-24.

xv. Metonymy

This device is used in rhetoric in which a thing or concept is not called by its own name, but by the name of something intimately associated with that thing or concept. So for example in the following verse when describing the story of Prophet Noah (peace be upon him), the Arabic word for ark or ship is not in the verse but is implied by Allah's mention of planks and nails:

"And We carried him on a (ship) made of planks and nails" Surah al-Qamar (The Moon) 54: 13.

xvi. Palindrome

This is a word or phrase that can be read both forwards and backwards, for example 'race car' or 'radar'. The Prophet Muhammad was unlettered, so

for him to construct palindromes in the Qur'an such as these would have been a very lengthy task of trial and error, especially when we consider that the Qur'an was revealed as an oral transmission and Prophet Muhammad would merely recite the revelation as soon as he had received it without editing or revising. Allah says in verse 3 of Surah al-Muddaththir (The One Enveloped, 74):

Translated into English this verse means;

"And magnify your Lord (Allah)!"

The example above of an Arabic palindrome is all the more remarkable because it maintains the Qur'an's consistent unique style, and retains a coherent meaning which is often lost in normal Arabic poetry. When we take a closer look, we see the verse is composed of a palindrome. The word rabbaka (Lord) written backwards forms kabbara meaning 'magnify'.

xvii. Parenthesis

This is an explanatory or qualifying word, clause or sentence inserted into a passage with which it doesn't necessarily have any grammatical connection. For example:

"But those who believed, and worked righteousness – We tax not any person beyond his scope – such are the dwellers of Paradise. They will abide therein forever." Surah al-A'raaf (The Heights) 7: 42.

xviii. Polyptoton

This stylistic scheme occurs when words are derived from the same root and repeated (e.g. 'strong' and 'strength'). In the Qur'an for example Allah says sabab-nal maa a' sabbaa and shaqaqq-nal arda shaqqaa:

"We pour forth water in abundance. And We split the earth in clefts." Surah 'Abasa (He Frowned) 80: 25-26.

xix. Rhetorical questions

This type of question is a figure of speech in the form of a question posed for its persuasive effect without the expectation of a reply (for example, Why me?). Rhetorical questions encourage the listener to think about what the (often obvious) answer to the question must be. When a speaker states, "How much longer must our people endure this injustice?", no formal answer is expected. Rather, it is a device used by the speaker to assert or deny something. In the Qur'an, Allah uses rhetorical questions in many places, for example:

"Is there any reward for good other than good?" Surah ar-Rahmaan (The Most Gracious) 55: 60.

"Then he turned to their alihah (gods) and said: "Will you not eat (of the offering before you)?" Surah as-Saaffaat (Those Ranged in Ranks) 37: 91.

xx. Synecdoche

This is closely related to metonymy and is a figure of speech that denotes a part of something but is used to

refer to the whole thing. For example 'a pair of hands' referring to a worker. In the following Qur'anic verse there are many different aspects to consider. Firstly, a synecdoche when the word *raqaba* meaning 'neck' is used to refer to the whole ie. a slave. Then the charitable act itself being likened to a steep path, in other words a difficult course of action.

The psycholinguistics behind the verse alone opens up for consideration various aspects of human psychology, behaviour and comprehension in relation to language. Lastly, the use of the word *raqaba* achieves the effect of maintaining the rhyme created by the previous key word, '*aqaba* (the steep path).

"And what will make you know the path that is steep? (It is) freeing a neck." Surah al-Balad (The City) 90: 12-13.

Qur'an bound stylistic variations.

Stylistic variation is the use of different features of language in a myriad of ways. Continuing with the comparison between the unique literary form of the Qur'an and Arabic rhymed prose or *saj'*, we find that the Qur'an uses literary and linguistic devices in such a way that has not been used before with unparalleled communicative effect.

The use of stylistic variation or stylistic differences, includes, but is not limited to:

1. Semantically driven assonance and rhyme
2. Grammatical shifts (iltifaat, in Arabic)
3. Interrelation between sound, structure and meaning
4. Choice of words
5. Unique linguistic genre
6. Word order

To illustrate these points further take the following two Qur'anic verses which are structurally identical but stylistically distinct:

"These are the limits set by God, so do not approach them"[25]

"These are the limits set by God, so do not transgress them"[26]

The first verb 'approach' occurs in the context of following a very serious prohibition in the same verse:

"...but do not associate with your wives while you are in spiritual retreat in the mosques."[27]

The second verb 'transgress' of the second verse entails flexibility signified by the conjunctions in the previous phrases 'either' and 'or':

"A divorce is only permissible twice: after that, the parties should either hold together on equitable terms, or separate with kindness."[28]

In the context of stylistic variation the above example can provide empirical evidence for the view that the Qur'an uses words and phrases specifically to provide an accurate and intended meaning.

How Are Stylistic Variations Unique To The Qur'an?

The Qur'an achieves its unique literary form by transcending the use of language that is common to saj'. S. M. Hajjaji-Jarrah in her article "The Enchantment of Reading: Sound, Meaning, and Expression in Surat Al-Adiyat", which discusses how the Qur'an achieves its uniqueness due to stylistic differences, states: "...Qur'anic 'Arabiyya brings forth a dazzling assembly of word meaning and sound defying the conventions of both the Arabian saj' and the literary rules of classical Arabic literature".[29]

The following examples provide linguistic and literary evidence for the Qur'an's stylistic distinction.

Example 1: Word Order, Sound And Meaning.

The following is an example of how the Qur'an combines words, sounds, meaning and order to achieve its communicative goal, the result of which is sublime rhetoric[30], unsurpassed eloquence and a unique literary form. Let us examine the text from verses 3 and 4 of Surah aal-Imraan (The Family of Imraan, 3):

"...And He sent down the Torah and the Gospel, Aforetime, as a guidance to mankind. And He sent down the Criterion..."

Working with the English transliteration the verse reads;

"wa-anzala at-tawrata waal-injeela min qablu hudan lilnnasi wa-anzala al-furqana"

An alternative order of the words is possible:

"wa-anzala at-tawrata waal-injeela waal-furqana min qablu hudan lilnnas"

However, when compared to the original this alternative arrangement has some flaws. Firstly, the alternative arrangement lacks rhythm, compared to the original Qur'anic structure, and it is phonetically inferior. Secondly, this arrangement has led to a disturbance in the meaning. This is due to the fact that the second use of the key word anzala (revealed) has been taken out and the final word al-furqana (the Criterion), whose position has a crucial semantic value, has been placed in the middle of the sentence.

In the original Qur'anic sentence, the repetition of the word anzala and the placement of al-furqana are essential devices employed to enhance the communicative, psycholinguistic and rhetorical effect. The repetition of the word anzala is to confirm the revelation of the Criterion and that it is indeed a Divine scripture while the placement of the word al-

furqana at the end of the sentence is to confirm that the Criterion is the last and final scripture.[31] Abd al-Qadir Ahmad 'Ata refers to examples like these as 'the chemical composition of the Qur'an which indicate the delicate and balanced stylistic variation in the Qur'an.[32]

Example 2: Grammatical Shift (iltifaat)

Professor Abdel Haleem in his article 'Grammatical Shift for Rhetorical Purposes: Iltifaat and related features in the Qur'an[33], highlighted another inimitable feature of the Qur'an, the extensive use of grammatical shifts. This feature is an effective rhetorical device that enhances the texts literary expression and achieves the communicative goal;[34] it is an accepted, well researched part of Arabic rhetoric. One can find references in the books of balagha (Arabic Rhetoric) by al-Athir, Suyuti and Zarkashi.[35]

These grammatical shifts include changes in person, change in number, change in addressee, change in tense, change in case marker, using a noun in place of a pronoun and many other changes.[36] An example of this complex rhetorical feature is exhibited in the following verse. It changes to talking about Allah, in the third person, to Allah Himself speaking in the first person plural of majesty:

"There is no good in most of their secret talk, only in commanding charity, or good, or reconciliation between people. To anyone who does these things,

seeking to please God, We shall give a rich reward."
Surah an-Nisaa (The Women, 4): 114.

Surah al-Kawthar provides another good example of the use of grammatical shift.

"Verily, We have granted you al-Kawthar. Therefore turn in prayer to your Lord and sacrifice. For he who hates you, he will be cut off." Surah al-Kawthar (A River in Paradise) 108: 1-3.

In this surah, there is a change from the first person plural 'We' in the first line to the second person '...your Lord'. This change is not an abrupt shift; it is calculated and highlights the intimate relationship between Allah and Prophet Muhammad . The use of 'We' as described above is used to emphasize the Majesty, Power and the Ability of Allah, whereas 'Your Lord' is used to indicate and emphasise intimacy, closeness and love; this is an apt use as the preceding concepts are about prayer, sacrifice and worship 'So to your Lord pray and sacrifice'. Furthermore, the purpose of this chapter is also to console Prophet Muhammad; using intimate language enhances the psycholinguistic effect. A final shift occurs from the second person to the third person singular.

These shifts contribute to the dynamic style of the Qur'an and are obvious stylistic features and accepted rhetorical practice. The Qur'an uses this feature in such a way that conforms to the theme of the text (semantically driven) while enhancing the

impact of the message it conveys. It is not surprising that Neal Robinson in his book 'Discovering the Qur'an: A Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text' concludes that the grammatical shifts used in the Qur'an, "...are a very effective rhetorical device." [37]

The Qur'an is the only form of Arabic prose to have used this rhetorical device in an extensive and complex manner. Professor Abdel Haleem states, "...it employs this feature far more extensively and in more variations than does Arabic poetry. It is, therefore, natural to find...no one seems to quote references in prose other than from the Qur'an." [38]

Hence, the Qur'an is stylistically distinct from any known form of Arabic speech. It uses linguistic and literary devices in such a way that have not been used before.

Example 3: Qur'anic precision

A further example of Qur'anic precision is found in a verse that mentions two of the attributes of Allah; al-Ghafoor (The Forgiving) and ar-Raheem (The Merciful). In the Qur'an we find that these two names of Allah are mentioned together more than seventy times, with the word al-Ghafoor always preceding ar-Raheem. However, in Surah Saba verse 2 (see below), we find that ar-Raheem is mentioned before al-Ghafoor. So the question arises as to why this might be.

"In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. All praise and thanks are to Allah, to

Whom belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. His is all praise and thanks in the Hereafter, and He is the All-Wise, the Well-Acquainted (with all things). He knows that which goes into the earth and that which comes forth from it, and that which descends from the heaven and that which ascends to it. And He is the Most Merciful, the Oft-Forgiving." Surah Saba (Sheba) 34: 1-2.

If we examine the content and structure of the whole verse in detail we see that the two attributes of Allah 'Mercy and Forgiveness' alternate as shown in the representation below. Allah begins verse two with the word "He knows" which has a direct connection with why ar-Raheem is mentioned first in this case.

If we carefully analyse this verse Allah says that "He knows that which goes into the earth..." If we consider the types of things that go into the earth such as seeds that are buried in the ground, worms, insects, drops of rain and the fact that human beings will also go into the earth when they die. Once in the ground we will need to rely on the Mercy of Allah. Then Allah says, "and that which comes forth from it". Vegetation, springs and rivers gushing forth are examples of all the types of things that come out of the earth. Similarly human beings will too come out from the earth when they are resurrected from their graves. At that time we will need to rely on Allah's attribute of al-Ghafoor (forgiveness).

The verse continues and Allah says "and that which descends from the heaven". Consider for a moment

what comes from the skies such as drops of rain, Divine commandments in the form of revelations, Allah's graces, favours and provisions. We see that all of these things are a mercy from Allah. Rain is a mercy, revelation is a mercy and provisions are a mercy. The verse then ends with "and that which ascends to it. And He is the Most Merciful, the Oft-Forgiving". Our deeds, supplications, and souls depart this word and all ascend to heaven and what is required in these instances from Allah is his forgiveness. Thus, each part of the verse connects with these two names and the verse has to end on ar-raheemul ghafoor in contrast to all other occurrences, in order to maintain the correct sequence.

This verse provides another excellent example of the precision and balance present throughout the Qur'an, coupled with a level of awareness of what is being said and the implications behind the words that would have been impossible for Prophet Muhammad to produce by himself and remain consistent over a period of twenty three years.

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Example 4: Maintenance of rhythm.

An example of textual precision and maintenance of rhythm in the Qur'an is found within the story of Prophet Moses (Musa, peace be upon him). Prophet Moses is mentioned together with his brother

Prophet Aaron (Harun, peace be upon him) in numerous places in the Qur'an. So for example in Surah A'raaf (The Heights), verses 121 and 122 we read:

"They said: "We believe in the Lord of the Alamîn (mankind, jinn and all that exists). The Lord of Moses and Aaron."

Note how all of the verses leading up to the mention of the Prophets Moses and Aaron end with the letter noon. Usually when we read the story about their meeting with the Pharaoh and his magicians as in the above verse, Prophet Moses is always mentioned before Prophet Aaron. However, there is one exception. In Surah TaaHaa (20) verse 70 Allah says:

"So, the magicians fell down prostrate. They said: "We believe in the Lord of Aaron and Moses."

The order of the names is different in this verse so that the rhythm of the recitation is maintained. The previous Qur'anic text shows that the verses preceding verse 70 all end on the letter alif. Hence, ending verse 70 with the name Musa, helps to maintain this style and rhythm.

Example 5: Singular and plural words

One of the many fascinating aspects of the Qur'an is that it never ceases to astound those who study it. As each layer of knowledge is unravelled further levels of understanding and comprehension are revealed. The fact that Allah the Creator has a very fine and

subtle knowledge of human nature in terms of how we think and feel is highlighted throughout the Qur'an. For example, whenever Allah uses the word sama' (listen) in the Qur'an it is usually in its singular rather than the plural form as in Surah al-Baqarah (The Heifer, 2) verse 7 we read;

"Allah has set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing, (i.e. they are closed from accepting Allah's Guidance), and on their eyes there is a covering. Theirs will be a great torment."

The highlighted text above shows that although the words quloobihim (hearts) and absaarihim (eyes) are in their plural forms the word sami'him (hearing) is singular. This is due to the fact that if we listen to speech, our hearts and minds all react on an individual basis, whereby we will translate and understand the speech according to our own personal understanding and comprehension of what was said. This type of subtlety is lost when the Qur'an is translated into another language, so the true linguistic miracle and magnificence of the Qur'an can only be fully appreciated from the original Arabic.

Another example of the use of singular and plural words occurs in Surah ash-Shu'araa (The Poets, 26). The following verses reveal how the people of the Prophets Noah and Lot (peace be upon them) and the people of Ad, Thamud and al-Aikah all denied the Messengers of Allah.

"The people of Noah denied the Messengers." Surah ash-Shu'araa (The Poets) 26: 105.

"(The people of) Ad denied the Messengers" Surah ash-Shu'araa (The Poets) 26: 123.

"(The people of) Thamud denied the Messengers." Surah ash-Shu'araa (The Poets) 26: 141.

"The people of Lot denied the Messengers." Surah ash-Shu'araa (The Poets) 26: 160.

"The dwellers of Al-Aikah denied the Messengers." Surah ash-Shu'araa (The Poets) 26: 176.

In all of these verses the apparent meaning is clear that all of these people denied their Messengers. However the choice of the plural word al-mursaleen (Messengers) rather than singular ar-rasool is more appropriate here. This is due to the fact that even if you deny one of Allah's Messengers it is as if you have denied them all because they all came with the same message, namely, Islam. As in the following verse where Allah says;

"Verily, those who disbelieve in Allah and His messengers and wish to make distinction between Allah and His messengers (by believing in Allah and disbelieving in His messengers) saying, "We believe in some but reject others," and wish to adopt a way in between. They are in truth disbelievers. And We have prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating torment. And those who believe in Allah and His

messengers and make no distinction between any of them (messengers), We shall give them their rewards; and Allah is Ever Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." Surah an-Nisaa (The Women) 4: 150-152.

Example 6: Qur'anic imagery and word choice

There are many examples in the Qur'an of a particular word being used rather than another word with a similar meaning that phonetically enhances the description in the text during its recitation. For instance, Allah says in Surah al-Hajj (The Pilgrimage, 22) verse 31:

"Hunafa' Lillah (i.e. worshipping none but Allah), not associating partners (in worship) to Him; and whoever assigns partners to Allah, it is as if he had fallen from the sky, and the birds had snatched him, or the wind had thrown him to a far off place."

Here (hunafa' lillah) means, sincerely submitting to Him alone, shunning falsehood and seeking the truth. Allah then says "not associating partners unto Him". Then Allah gives a likeness of the idolator in his misguidance and being doomed and being far away from true guidance, and says: whoever assigns partners to Allah, it is as if he had fallen from the sky, and the birds had snatched him, or the wind had thrown him to a far off place."

This whole passage conjures up a vivid scene of a person falling down from the sky from a great height about to be violently broken into pieces or he may be

swept away by the wind or thrown into a bottomless depth. What is striking is the rapid and violent movement, with scenes happening in quick succession and then disappearing completely.

The interesting point to note here is that the verse ends with the word *saheel*, rather than an alternative word, *baed*. Both of these have a very similar meaning: remote, distant and faraway. However, the word *saheel* is used because it ends in the letter *qaf*, which is a 'heavy' letter in the Arabic alphabet as opposed to the 'lighter' *daal* at the end of the word *baed*. In this case the verse ends on a much harder note, which strengthens and underlines the stark events being portrayed in the verse.

The verse represents a very accurate picture and apt description of one who associates partners with Allah. He falls from the sublime height of faith to land in utter destruction. Finishing the verse with the letter *qaf* shows the severity of the matter, and that when the person is thrown to the faraway place the landing is not soft, rather he is smashed on the ground with a crack. This type of example highlights further the unique inter-relationship between the precise choice of Qur'anic words, their resonance and how this effects the meaning of a particular verse.

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"The people of Lot denied the Messengers." Surah ash-Shu'araa (The Poets) 26: 160.

"The dwellers of Al-Aikah denied the Messengers." Surah ash-Shu'araa (The Poets) 26: 176.

In all of these verses the apparent meaning is clear that all of these people denied their Messengers. However the choice of the plural word al-mursaleen (Messengers) rather than singular ar-rasool is more appropriate here. This is due to the fact that even if you deny one of Allah's Messengers it is as if you have denied them all because they all came with the same message, namely, Islam. As in the following verse where Allah says;

"Verily, those who disbelieve in Allah and His messengers and wish to make distinction between Allah and His messengers (by believing in Allah and disbelieving in His messengers) saying, "We believe in some but reject others," and wish to adopt a way in between. They are in truth disbelievers. And We have prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating torment. And those who believe in Allah and His

messengers and make no distinction between any of them (messengers), We shall give them their rewards; and Allah is Ever Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." Surah an-Nisaa (The Women) 4: 150-152.

Example 6: Imagery And Word Choice.

There are many examples in the Qur'an of a particular word being used rather than another word with a similar meaning that phonetically enhances the description in the text during its recitation. For instance, Allah says in Surah al-Hajj (The Pilgrimage, 22) verse 31:

"Hunafa' Lillah (i.e. worshipping none but Allah), not associating partners (in worship) to Him; and whoever assigns partners to Allah, it is as if he had fallen from the sky, and the birds had snatched him, or the wind had thrown him to a far off place."

Here (hunafa' lillah) means, sincerely submitting to Him alone, shunning falsehood and seeking the truth. Allah then says "not associating partners unto Him". Then Allah gives a likeness of the idolator in his misguidance and being doomed and being far away from true guidance, and says: whoever assigns partners to Allah, it is as if he had fallen from the sky, and the birds had snatched him, or the wind had thrown him to a far off place."

This whole passage conjures up a vivid scene of a person falling down from the sky from a great height about to be violently broken into pieces or he may be swept away by the wind or thrown into a bottomless

depth. What is striking is the rapid and violent movement, with scenes happening in quick succession and then disappearing completely.

The interesting point to note here is that the verse ends with the word saheeq, rather than an alternative word, baeed. Both of these have a very similar meaning: remote, distant and faraway. However, the word saheeq is used because it ends in the letter qaf, which is a 'heavy' letter in the Arabic alphabet as opposed to the 'lighter' daal at the end of the word baeed. In this case the verse ends on a much harder note, which strengthens and underlines the stark events being portrayed in the verse.

The verse represents a very accurate picture and apt description of one who associates partners with Allah. He falls from the sublime height of faith to land in utter destruction. Finishing the verse with the letter qaf shows the severity of the matter, and that when the person is thrown to the faraway place the landing is not soft, rather he is smashed on the ground with a crack. This type of example highlights further the unique inter-relationship between the precise choice of Qur'anic words, their resonance and how this effects the meaning of a particular verse.

Example 7: The Challenge: Surah Al Kausar.

Surah al-Kawthar is the shortest surah in the Qur'an with only three short verses and like all of the other chapters in the Qur'an, has an unmatched selection of words, pronouns, word order and meaning.

Moreover, anyone attempting to take up the challenge of the Qur'an only needs to produce something comparable to it. By briefly analysing this chapter's first verse it provides an insight into how this matchless and eloquent discourse is achieved.

i. Emphasis And Choice of Pronoun

Verily, We have granted you al-Kawthar.

Inna a'tayna kal kawthar

Therefore turn in prayer to your Lord and sacrifice.

Fasalli li rabbika wanhar

For he who hates you, he will be cut off.

Inna shani-aka huwal abtar

The use of the words (Verily, We) at the start of al-Kawthar is emphatic; also the plural is used to indicate power, certainty, ability, greater quantity or sometimes to stress the status and greatness (li-ta'zim al-mutakallim aw ihtimaman bidhikr rabbika wa ta'ziman). This is an apt choice of pronoun as its persuasive force can not be matched by any other pronoun. The effect is "The Creator, who has power to do anything, has indeed given you...."

ii. Word Choice

The term a'tayn has been used instead of aataaina' because of a subtle difference. The difference as defined by Ibn Manzoor in his Lisan al-Arab is that the Qur'anic choice indicates 'to hand over with one's own hand' whereas the non Qur'anic selection does not provide this meaning.

This choice of word is apt as it strengthens the sentence emphasizing the surety of giving, ability, greatness, power and intimacy (to console and strengthen Prophet Muhammad). The verb has also been used in the past tense which indicates that it has already happened

and makes it definitive. This further accentuates the meaning of surety, power and greatness. This also expresses certainty of a promise; in this case Prophet Muhammad will have al-Kawthar, or abundance.

The root stem for the word al-Kawthar are the letters kaf, tha and ra (kathara). This signifies plentiful, multitude, overflowing, rich, unstinting and unending. Other derivations of this root include:

1. katha-ratun: Multitude
2. katheerun: Much, many, numerous
3. ak'tharu: More numerous (emphasis)
4. kath-thara: To multiply
5. takathur: Act of multiplying
6. is-thak-thara: To wish for much

Al-Qurtubi states that the Arabs used 'kawthar' to denote anything which is great in quantity or value. This word can not be replaced with another, as its

meaning can not be matched equally with any other Arabic word.

iii. Word Arrangement

The placement of al-Kawthar is an attribute; plentiful and abundance. However, this word has been placed at the end of the verse with no word after to be attributed to it, as al-Qurtubi points out, this indicates that Prophet Muhammad has been given an abundance of everything. Islamic scholars state that if Allah had bestowed one thing in great multitude then that would have been mentioned. However, due to giving Prophet Muhammad an abundance of everything, nothing is mentioned to indicate everything or many things. Also, within the science of eloquence and rhetoric, mentioning all things would be superfluous and not a good use of language.

iv. Multiple meaning

The word al-Kawthar has been given multiple meanings by the scholars. These meanings include:

1. A river of Paradise from which rivers flow.
2. The fountain on the Day of Judgement from which Prophet Muhammad will quench the thirst of his people.
3. His prophethood.
4. The Qur'an.
5. The way of life called Islam.

6. The multitude of his companions; no other prophet had as many companions as Prophet Muhammad.

7. Elevated status. No one is more researched, more mentioned, more praised and more loved than Prophet Muhammad.

8. It is a multitude of goodness.

Just by briefly looking at Surah al-Kawthar's first line it can be seen that the words, word order and pronoun have been carefully selected to enhance the meaning. Any attempt to change the words or word order will truly cease to sound like the Qur'an, and the powerful meaning would be lost. As we have discussed, the Qur'an is unique in that it does not follow the normal pattern of Arabic poetry and prose. The flow of the Qur'an is not interrupted by the repeated detail contained in many of its verses. In fact, part of the beauty of the Qur'an can be attributed to its precise detail and accuracy.

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Place: Peter Lane, Kolkata 700073.

Email: RIYAZSALIHEEN@GMAIL.COM

<https://darulahnaf.blogspot.com>

General Editor & Research Coordinator: Shakeel

Advocate. x. com: @humvee

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